

DEFENSE DAILY
8 July 1980

CHINA NEEDS FOREIGN ASSISTANCE FOR RAPID MILITARY GROWTH

It will take the People's Republic of China a long time to catch up to the United States and the Soviet Union in military strength because of China's economic and technological weakness, the Central Intelligence Agency has reported.

"In spite of progress to date, China remains a poorly developed nation," the CIA said. "The major constraints on more rapid defense modernization are economic and technological."

The progress that China is making economically will benefit the Chinese military, the agency said, "but in the absence of large-scale foreign assistance, which we believe unlikely, limited resources and competing demands throughout the economy will require that force modernization be gradual and spread over an extended period of time."

The report noted that most of China's "few aging scientists" were trained abroad in the 1950's and that the few new weapons being developed by the Chinese are no more advanced than Soviet technology of the early 1960's.

CIA Director Stansfield Turner stated that "imprudent economic adventures in years past" caused the Chinese to fall behind the rest of the developed world economically and technologically.

Commenting on China's limited attack on Vietnam early last year, Turner said China's combat performance was "workmanlike but unspectacular."

The CIA report put China's armed forces strength as high as 8.3 million men, by far the largest in the world.

Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wis.) said the CIA findings make it clear that China's military strength is no match for that of the U.S.

While it would "obviously be ridiculous" to believe that the Chinese military strength is comparable to that of the U.S., Proxmire said, a similar mistake is often made in comparing the Soviet defense program with that of the U.S. He claimed that not only Chinese but also Soviet technological and economic inferiority are overlooked by those who warn of the Soviet military threat and seek higher U.S. defense spending to counter that threat.